

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PINT, NZ

SUBJECT: LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP UNCHANGED

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: IN WHAT CONSTITUTED FIRST ENDORSEMENT OF THEIR LEADERSHIP SINCE DEATH OF PRIME MINISTER NORMAN KIRK IN 1974 AND LABOUR'S ELECTION DEFEAT OF 1975, BILL ROWLING AND R.J. TIZARD WERE RE-ELECTED JANUARY 19 AS LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER, RESPECTIVELY, OF THE LABOUR PARY. ELECTION BOLSSERTED ROWLING'S AUTHORITY AND MEANS THAT HE WILL LEAD LABOUR INTO 1978 ELECTIONS.

2. BY TRADITION, LABOUR PARTY HAS CAUCUSED FOR PURPOSE OF LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS LATE IN PARLIAMENTARY SESSION. BUT IN EFFORT TO QUELL RUMORS AND SPECULATION ABOUT HIS OWN FUTURE, ROWLING PUSHED THROUGH LAST MONTH A CHANGE IN LABOUR PARTY CONSTITUTION BRINGING THE 1977 LEADERSHIP CAUCUS DATE FORWARD. HIS UNOPPOSED RE-ELECTION, DESPITE DISENCHANTMENT AMONG CONSERVATIVE LABOUR ELEMENTS FOR HIS LIBERAL LEADERSHIP DURING PAST YEAR, VINDICATE ROWLING'S STRATEGY. TIZARD DID, HOWEVER,
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MEET OPPOSITION, NOT FROM FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER FAULKNER OR FORMER MINISTER OF POLICE CONNELLY AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED, BUT FROM AUCKLAND M.P., EDDIE ISBEY.

3. JUBILANT WITH THEIR VICTORY, ROWLING AND TIZARD MET WITH PRESS FOLLOWING THE CAUCUS JANUARY 19. ROWLING ANNOUNCED THERE WILL BE RESHUFFLING OF OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN AND RESPONSIBILITIES

AS WELL AS PARTY'S FRONT BENCH, BUT SHIFTS WILL BE MINOR AND NOT LIKELY TO OCCUR UNTIL AFTER PARLIAMENT CONVENES. ROWLING ADDED THAT IN REFLECTION HE "WAS PERHAPS A LITTLE TOO GENTLE AND PERHAPS...DID NOT APPLY THE WHIP ENOUGH IN GETTING THE BEST OUT OF ALL". THERE WILL BE NO ROOM FOR "PRIMA DONNAS" IN LABOUR PARTY THIS YEAR, HE CONTINUED, AND IF ANYONE DID NOT OBSERVE DISCIPLINE OR WORK TO CAPACITY, HE WOULD MOVE THEM OUT TO MAKE ROOM FOR SOMEONE ELSE. THE PARTY WILL BE MOVING INTO "MORE POSITIVE POLITICS" THIS YEAR LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE 1978 ELECTIONS, ROWLING CONCLUDED. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN LOU: COMMENT: BOTH ROWLING AND TIZARD WERE CLEARLY STUNG AT END OF 1976 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION BY CRITICISM OF HIS LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE LABOUR PARTY. ROWLING'S DECISION TO MOVE LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS UP TO JANUARY WAS IN LARGE MEASURE BASED ON HIS FEAR THAT DISCONTENT WOULD FESTER AND GROW, ULTIMATELY THREATENING HIS LEADERSHIP FOR 1978 ELECTIONS. THE CHALLENGE TO TIZARD'S POSITION INDICATES THAT DISCONTENT IS STILL PRESENT IN LABOUR'S RANKS BUT HAS BEEN DEFLECTED ONTO TIZARD WHOSE 1976 PERFORMANCE WAS EVEN MORE LACKLUSTER THAN ROWLING'S. WHILE ROWLING CARRIES A STRONG A PARTY MANDATE TODAY AS HE IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER HE CAN CONVERT THIS POSITION OF RELATIVE PERSONAL STRENGTH INTO ONE OF IMPROVED ELECTORAL PROSPECTS FOR THE PARTY.

5. ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH WHICH ROWLING MUST COPE IS SPLIT BETWEEN INDUSTRIAL AND ACADEMIC WINGS OF THE PARTY. IT WAS THE FEELING THAT ROWLING AND TIZARD ARE OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AVERAGE WORKER THAT LED THE POWERFUL ENGINEERS UNIONS TO WITHDRAW ITS LABOUR PARTY AFFILIATION LATE LAST YEAR. AS ONE POLITICAL CARTOONIST HAS DRAWN IT, THE JOCKEY HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE 1978 RACE, BUT IT'S QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THE LABOUR "HORSE" CAN BE MADE HEALTHY ENOUGH IN THE COMING MONTHS TO RUN A GOOD CHALLENGE AGAINST ROB MULDOON SITTING FIRMLY ASTRIDE A FIT NATIONAL. SELDEN

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